

# The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible

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The first thing one learns in almost any Introduction to the Bible course offered on college campuses today is that Genesis begins with not one, but two, stories of creation. These two narratives, we are taught, offer two greatly differing accounts of the creation of the world. In the first story (Gen 1:1-2:4a), which proceeds day-by-day over the course of seven days, God first creates elements of the cosmos, the living things in the order of vegetation, the animal kingdom, and, finally, humans. The method of creation is by fiat: God says simply “let something happen” and it happens. The creation of humans includes both man and woman—male and female—at one and the same time.

In the second story (Gen 2:4b-3), a very different view is presented. There is no attempt at a time frame; items such as the sun, the moon, and the stars are not mentioned; the order of creation is first, man, then vegetation, then animals, and, finally, woman; the method of creation is by physical means, as indicated by the words “formed,” “planted,” and “built,” all predicated of God; and, unlike the first story, man and woman are not created at the same time, but rather Adam is created first and only later is Eve fashioned out of Adam’s side (the Hebrew is traditionally understood as “rib,” but more likely means “side”).

In addition, the name by which God is called in these two accounts is different. In the first story the deity is referred to as Elohim = “God”; in the second story the name used is the compound form YHWH-Elohim = “LORD God.” Those scholars who engage in traditional source criticism ascribe the first of these stories to the priestly source, or P, and the second of these stories to the Yahwist source, or J. I will not proceed further along the lines of the documentary hypothesis, mentioning it only in passing as an important element of modern biblical scholarship—not immediately relevant to our discussion of food, except, perhaps, as food for thought.<sup>1</sup>

In my attempt to work with these two accounts as two pieces of a literary whole, I am struck by the fact that the two accounts present totally different perspectives of the one singular creation. The perspectives may be termed, respectively, the cosmocentric view and the anthropocentric view. In the first one, we see the entire cosmos created, thus the references to light, expanse, dry land, seas, sun, moon, stars, and so forth; we also can understand the use of creation by fiat, characteristic of an awesome and majestic God. In the second account, we see only the view from earth, and thus we can understand the author's use of more basic methods of creation, such as God's forming man from the clay, in the manner in which a potter forms a vessel, or God's planting the Garden of Eden, in a style no different than a backyard gardener planting his or her own garden.

The text even provides a valuable clue for the reader to recognize this crucial difference of perspective. The first story is introduced by the phrase, "when God began to create heaven and earth" (traditionally rendered in English as "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"). Note the order of the two main items: "heaven" and "earth" (Gen 1:1; see also Gen 2:4a). The second story, by contrast, is introduced by the expression "on the day that LORD God made earth and heaven"; note the changed order, "earth and heaven" in this verse (Gen 2:4b).<sup>2</sup>

Pamela Reis shares a similar approach to the one that I am taking here, although she took this understanding of these chapters one step further. Reis contends that we should read the beginning of Genesis in the same way that we view the classic Japanese film *Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa.<sup>3</sup> The brilliance of the film lies in Kurosawa's allowing different characters to tell the same story, each from his or her perspective. Similarly, with the Torah we should read the narrative as a literary whole, though we recognize that two different viewpoints underlie the two stories.

Where does this leave us? As the title of my talk adumbrates, there is no meat to my topic. Yet, as the two creation stories differ in so many ways, their singular vision is truly extraordinary: the two accounts share only one major theme in common—the vegetarian ideal.

In both stories, God creates a world characterized by vegetarianism. In the first account, we read, "And God said [to the human couple], 'Behold I give to you all the vegetation that sprouts seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which the fruit of the tree sprouts seed, for you it shall be as food'" (Gen 1:29). God then continues,

“And to all the animals of the earth and to all the birds of the sky and to all that creeps on the earth, in which there is a living life, [I give] all the green vegetation for food” (Gen 1:30). Not only are the humans created as vegetarians, but the entire animal kingdom is, too. We humans, of course, can live as vegetarians, and a large portion of the animal kingdom is herbivorous. At the same time, however, the ancient Israelites obviously knew that many species of animals were not simply omnivores but rather carnivores. Species like the lion, the leopard, and the bear, among the land animals, and species like the eagle, the vulture, and the owl, among birds, are all mentioned in the Bible; they are native to the land of Israel, and they are all meat eaters. Never mind, says the idealistic author of Gen 1: at the time of creation God established a purely harmonious world, one characterized by vegetarianism.

The vegetarian ideal is somewhat less explicit in the second creation story, but it is present there nonetheless. After creating man, God planted a garden in Eden and then placed man in the garden to till it and to keep it. We next read, “And the LORD God commanded man saying, ‘From every tree of the garden you indeed may eat’ (Gen 2:16). The passage continues with the famous prohibition forbidding man from eating from the tree of knowledge, for which the general command, to eat of the other trees, serves as background. While there is clearly something quite specific intended here, I would still read the command to eat of the trees of the garden, without any other mention of eating in this chapter, as implying a vegetarian world in this second creation story as well. Further confirmation for this view appears in the next chapter, which focuses on the hard work required in the cultivation of crops (Gen 3:17-19), with the explicit statement, “and you shall eat of the vegetation of the field” (Gen 3:18).<sup>4</sup>

Two stories with major, and in fact irreconcilable, differences have one thing in common: God commands a vegetarian lifestyle for humans in both stories (God also commands it explicitly for the animal kingdom in the first story and probably implicitly in the second story). The vegetarian ideal in these two stories is, I submit, like the dagger in *Rashomon*. Each of the four storytellers in the film has a different tale to tell, but they all agree on one detail, the presence of the dagger. The bandit, the woman, the dead man (who speaks in the film through a medium), and the woodcutter each tells his or her own tale, each, as in the biblical narratives, with contradictory information, but Kurosawa ensures that our attention is turned each time to the special dagger that

plays a central role in each character's version. In like manner, the biblical author ensures that our ears focus on the food that humans are to eat. In fact, in contrast to the usual economical writing style employed by the biblical prose writers, there is a certain verbosity in the description of the vegetarianism inherent at creation, especially in the first account. Let me cite those words once more: "And God said, 'Behold I give to you all the vegetation that sprouts seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which the fruit of the tree sprouts seed, for you it shall be as food. And to all the animals of the earth and to all the birds of the sky and to all that creeps on the earth, in which there is a living life, [I give] all the green vegetation for food'" (Gen 1:29-30). This is by far God's longest speech in the first creation story. It is as if a movie camera focuses for a moment on this aspect of the narrative.<sup>5</sup>

If the world is established in a vegetarian mode, what happens? As narrated in Genesis, humans are unable to live up to the ideals that God established at creation. Even God's first command, the relatively simple prohibition not to eat from the tree of knowledge, is too much to follow. Then we read of the world's first murder, the fratricide of Abel by Cain (Gen 4). Next we read of the lascivious relationships conducted by the "sons of God" and the "daughters of man" (Gen 6), acts accepted in the world of ancient Near Eastern mythology, but ones which the Bible presents as the epitome of worldly depravity. These transgressions lead God to destroy the world that he has created, with Noah and his family and the pairs of animals Noah gathers as sole survivors of the flood.

After the flood, we have a fresh beginning. In Gen 9, God repeats many of the same words that he expressed to the first human couple in Gen 1 to Noah and his sons, including such expressions as "be fertile and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1; compare Gen 1:28). But there is a major difference now. God realizes that man cannot live up to the ideals established at creation, so a different set of rules is now presented. Among these rules is the permission to eat meat: "every creature which lives, to you shall be for food, as with the green vegetation, I give to you everything" (Gen 9:3). To which is attached one important proviso: "however, flesh with its life-blood in it, you shall not eat" (Gen 9:4). In the Torah's grand narrative, accordingly, the consumption of meat is a compromise, a divine acceptance of human inability to adhere to the utopia established at creation.

It is important here to add a word on this passage from Gen 9. Meat is now permitted, but as this verse indicates and as we shall see further below, especially in connection with the dietary laws distinctive to the people of Israel, wanton consumption of meat is not permitted. Eating meat is a compromise, requiring the killing of an animal. It violates the vegetarian ideal established in Gen 1 and 2. Therefore, humans cannot eat blood, the essential ingredient of life in all living creatures. The Torah is stating very clearly that one may take the life of an animal if necessary, but must not consume its life-essence. The reader of the Torah is reminded that eating meat compromises the Torah's utopian *Weltanschauung*.

We now turn our attention to the most detailed presentation of kashrut in the Bible, Lev 11. Numerous scholars have attempted to determine the reasons behind the dietary laws in the Torah. The key questions are: Why are these specific animals considered kosher? And why are other specific animals deemed not kosher? Further, is there any system which coheres throughout that would make the dietary laws explicable? In the many attempts to answer these questions, two approaches rise above the rest. The first is the approach of Mary Douglas.<sup>6</sup>

In her anthropological field work in the Congo in the 1960s, Douglas noted that many primitive<sup>7</sup> societies have complex dietary laws. As an example, Douglas presented the evidence of the Bushmen, first studied by Louis Fourie in the 1920s, later used by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the development of his theory of totemism.<sup>8</sup> Among the Bushmen, the various parts of an animal killed in the hunt are divided up among the various elements of the society. Women may never eat the liver. The wife of the man who killed the animal can eat only the superficial covering of meat and fat surrounding the hindquarters and the entrails. Young boys eat only the abdominal wall, the kidneys, the genitals, and the udder. The man who actually killed the animal can eat only the ribs and the shoulder blade from one side of the animal. The tribal chief and his family are treated to a thick steak from each quarter and a cutlet taken from each side. Arbitrary as these rules may seem to the modern reader, there are credible reasons for some of these divisions. Since the liver, with its high blood content, would spoil before it was brought back to camp, this organ was eaten on the spot by the men; therefore women never had the opportunity to eat the liver. The presentation of the animal's genitals to the young boys has obvious connections.

For the other parts of the animal divided up among the other elements of the society, there are presumably also reasons, even if we cannot deduce them so readily. In truth, however, a search for the origin of each distribution is unnecessary, for such a “logical” search overlooks the essential meaning of the rules surrounding food. As Lévi-Strauss maintains, it is crucial to recognize that the classification of the animal’s anatomy serves as a schematization of social categories. That is to say, the Bushmen have projected their own social structure onto the animal. As we view the practice described above, it is not important that we understand why food is distributed in the way it is. It is only important to know that the distinctions exist. The practice reflects the Bushmen’s self-understanding of organizational and governing principles for their society. In short, the animal killed by the Bushmen hunter represents the Bushmen people, the individual sections corresponding, in some way, to the people themselves, with part A allocated to society segment X, part B to society segment Y, and so on.

Those societies are not alone in their natural urge to organize the world around them. We in the modern world have taken the art of taxonomy to new heights with our ever-expanding world of knowledge. In the field of linguistics, for example, the world’s languages are divided along various lines. Historical linguistics classifies them genetically: English is an Indo-European language, Hebrew is Semitic, Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family, and so on. Typological linguistics divides the world’s languages into three groups: inflecting, agglutinating, and isolating, depending on how the language expresses tense, plurality, and other grammatical issues. Syntactic analysis allows for still another system, depending on the order of the subject, verb, and object in the sentence: English is an SVO language, Japanese is an SOV language, and Welsh is a VSO language, to cite one example from each of the most common types. Chemists, biologists, and other scientists have similar ways of carving up their worlds. In fact, such worlds are ever-changing. When I learned the periodic table, the six gases at the far right of the chart were called the inert gases, my children have learned them as the noble gases, and chemists are more likely to refer to them as Group 18.<sup>9</sup> But it is not just the knowledge explosion of the twentieth century which has allowed us this ability to classify. It is a natural desire among humans to classify and organize the world around us. In this way I would explain the remarkable lexical lists of the ancient Akkadian scribes, cataloguing in great number different birds, different

trees, the names of various gods, and so on.

To return to ancient Israel, the Torah begins, as we noted earlier, with a creation story presenting an orderly world, including the subdivisions of the animal kingdom. Leviticus 11 continues that system, but it goes a step further. This chapter of the Torah dislikes animals that are, to use Mary Douglas's terminology, "out-of-place"; that is, they do not quite fit the classification system.<sup>10</sup> The three major domesticated animals—cattle, sheep, and goats—have a split hoof and chew the cud; an animal that does not have both of these traits is out-of-place and is therefore considered impure and not to be eaten. Sea creatures should have fins and scales to enable them to swim easily through the water; those marine animals that do not, such as mollusks and crustaceans, are once more out-of-place and thus may not be eaten. Birds are meant to fly and have tiny legs; those that cannot fly, such as the ostrich, or those that have large legs with talons, such as the eagle, or those animals that fly but are not birds at all, such as the bat, are all non-kosher. The non-kosher animals, therefore, are all out-of-place; they thus elicit disgust, much as a modern Westerner would be disgusted to find a pair of shoes, even a clean pair, on the kitchen table or a hairbrush in the living room.<sup>11</sup>

For Douglas, it is not important that goats are kosher and pigs are not: it is important only that there are distinctions, that the people of Israel saw the one as in-place and the other as out-of-place. To my mind and in line with a study by Walter Houston, the defining criterion for why the cloven-hoofed ruminants are in-place, while the pig is out-of-place, has to do with Israel's pastoral origins, where sheep, goats, and cattle were the animals with which the people lived, to the exclusion of the pig, which neither grazes nor provides humans with milk.<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of the origins of these distinctions, more important for Douglas is the dichotomy itself, representing Israel's worldview: just as only certain species among the entirety of the animal kingdom are deemed suitable for eating, so is Israel among all the peoples of the world deemed suitable as the covenant partner of God. For Douglas, behind the very abstruse details of Israelite dietary laws lies a profound theological message:

They [the people of Israel] have been singled out for the honour of being consecrated to God, to be his people. The height and depth of this honour is inexpressible. At another level it is a parallel honour for their flocks and herds, the cloven-hoofed ruminants, to be singled out of all animal kinds to be

consecrated to God. This paradigm turns the covenant animals into vassals in relation to the people of Israel, as are the people of Israel the vassals of God.<sup>13</sup>

Jacob Milgrom, who has been in dialogue with Mary Douglas for three decades, is not convinced of her entire argument, but he does accept one major component of it: the idea that the permitted animals serve as a projection of the people of Israel into another realm. Milgrom goes one step further in adapting Douglas's view, and he does so in a most constructive way. The humankind/animal kingdom parallel works at three levels [fig. 1].<sup>14</sup> There are many peoples in the world and there are many animals in the world; in theory all peoples can eat all animals, as the story of Noah in Gen 9 affirms. But a unique people, the people of Israel, can eat only a certain subset of those animals, the ones delineated in Lev 11 as kosher. Furthermore, Milgrom argues that of the kosher animals, only certain among them can be offered as sacrifices. Deer, fish, ducks, chicken, locusts, and other creatures are kosher, but they cannot be sacrificed on the altar. This distinction reflects, not surprisingly, the fact that within the people of Israel there is a specific subset of people who are seen as even more special, unique, set off from the rest of the people, and they are the *kohanim*, the priests, whose sole consumption of meat, according to the book of Leviticus, comes from the sacrificial altar.

There is, however, another approach to the dietary laws worthy of our consideration. This second approach takes note of the important fact that the permitted animals are all herbivores. I have not been able to isolate the scholar with whom this view originates, but here I would mention, among recent authors, Baruch Levine and Ed Greenstein.<sup>15</sup> This approach, moreover, is the one to which I subscribe, though I will, in just a moment, add something new.

Let us first review the basic facts. The land animals are the three domesticated cloven-hoofed ruminants, to which can be added one wild animal, the deer (including the many individual species subsumed in that category, such as the gazelle and the antelope). These mammals are all herbivores. Note again that the pig, the lone outcast among the major farm animals, is an omnivore.

Fish must have fins and scales in order to be eaten, and this description therefore excludes the various scavengers on the river bed or the ocean bed, such as crabs, lobsters, shrimp, and crayfish. Leviticus 11 provides no traits for the permitted birds, but from the list of the

twenty forbidden species,<sup>16</sup> including eagles, vultures, owls, and so on, we may conclude, as does the Mishna (*Hullin* 3:6), that birds of prey are forbidden, while other birds, such as doves, pigeons, and quail, are permitted. Finally, we may note that four species of locusts are kosher, even though most Jewish communities no longer eat these creatures.

From what I have just described, it is clear that the permitted animals are all herbivores. There are, I admit, some minor exceptions. Clearly the pastoral origins of ancient Israel, which we mentioned earlier, would preclude an intimate familiarity with fish (some permitted fish do eat others) and with fish-eating fowl (such as ducks). And even after the Israelites settled the mountainous spine of the central hill country in the land of Canaan, there still would be little acquaintance with these creatures. Most importantly, the herbivore approach explains the fact that locusts are permitted, for they are the plant devourers par excellence in our ancient sources; note such diverse texts as Exod 10 describing the eighth plague and Joel's use of the locust metaphor to describe the utter destruction wrought against the people of Israel (Joel 1:4).

The bottom line of this argument is this: humans are unable to live up to the vegetarian ideal set forth at creation; God compromises and allows humanity to eat meat.<sup>17</sup> But Israel wishes to adhere to that ideal, even in compromised fashion, and therefore Israel consumes only those animals that themselves have not killed other animals. The prohibition against eating blood, which I mentioned earlier, should also be worked into this equation. We know that other cultures did consume blood; we have specific evidence of this from Ugarit, for example.<sup>18</sup> Israel, however, holds to the ideal of not eating blood; in fact, it is a major component of the laws of the Torah, repeated time and again in Leviticus with echoes throughout the Bible. Accordingly, Israel prohibits not only the eating of blood but also the consumption of those animals that themselves ingest blood, lest Israel consume blood "through the backdoor," as it were. Note that according to my reconstruction here, the vegetarian ideal comes first, and only secondarily were distinguishing characteristics (cloven hoof, rumination, fins, scales, etc.) noted, in somewhat artificial fashion.

Of these two approaches, the Douglas-Milgrom approach on the one hand, and the herbivore model on the other, there would appear to be little common ground. I here propose, however, that the two perspectives can fit together: permitted animals, the vegetarians, can be viewed as a projection of Israel's values onto the realm of the animals.

Israel clearly stressed the vegetarian ideal, and while it could not uphold the ideal, it transfers that ideal onto the animal kingdom, permitting herbivorous animals to be eaten. These animals, I submit, remind the Israelites of who they are or at least of who they should aspire to be in an ideal world.<sup>19</sup>

I admit this schema is not entirely satisfactory, since the Torah itself specifically mentions the camel, the hyrax, and the rabbit, all herbivores, as forbidden animals, as are horses, donkeys, and other animals with which the Israelites were familiar. I would comment only that one must recall, as noted above, the pastoral origins of Israel, in which cattle, sheep, and goats played such a major role. If coincidentally the deer had the same characteristics it might also be considered kosher.<sup>20</sup> But animals that lacked these traits or that had only one of them, even if they be herbivores, were simply excluded. Douglas would for this reason call these excluded animals out-of-place,<sup>21</sup> not appropriate in light of Israel's origins as a pastoral society located on the fringe of the desert.

I have dealt with the distant past—creation—and I have dealt with the present—the reality of the dietary laws from the biblical period until today. But I cannot conclude this essay without dealing with the third epoch of linear time—the future, which in the biblical world view is associated with the eschaton [the term is based on the Greek for “last things”].

The prophets of ancient Israel recognized that they lived in a most difficult period. Isaiah, for example, lived at the time of the Assyrians, the greatest military power the world had ever known and creators of the world's first real empire. He witnessed the Assyrian destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. In time, these Assyrians would sack dozens of Judean cities as well and besiege Jerusalem for three years, though the city remained inviolate. Isaiah understood these devastations as divine punishments for Israel's and Judah's misdeeds. Yet he never lost hold of the prophetic spirit, which looked to a time in the future when the world would be a better place than it is today. This eschaton is described in Isaiah in various ways. Among the most famous passages is Isa 2 (see also Micah 4), in which people “shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,” bringing an end to all warfare, a time when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:4 = Mic 4:3).

My favorite description of the eschaton occurs in Isa 11, in which Isaiah portrays harmony not among nations, as in chapter 2, but among

animals. The natural enemies, the animals that prey and the animals that are preyed upon, are paired off, as an exemplar of what the world will be like in this period of perfect harmony: "And the wolf will dwell with the sheep, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, with a young lad leading them. And the cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa 11:6-7). Thus, in Isaiah's portrayal of the future world, the animals return to their vegetarian state, no longer consuming their traditional prey: the lion will have to learn to eat straw like the ox. At this time we all will return to the paradise of creation. Isaiah's worldview can be viewed through the a timeline [fig. 2], with (a) creation at one end, characterized by peace and harmony and vegetarianism; (b) history displayed on the great length of the timeline, characterized by war and violence and meat-eating; and (c) the eschaton at the other end, once more characterized by peace, harmony, and vegetarianism. When Isaiah sought to highlight what the eschaton would be like, he settled upon vegetarianism, just as the author(s) of Gen 1-2 had.

Finally, and perhaps even more remarkably, Isaiah's words were reused about 160 years later by Second Isaiah, an anonymous prophet who lived in exile in Babylon around 540 BCE. The culminating verse in one of the most glorious passages in the entire Bible is found in Isa 65, where the prophet presents his view of a new heaven and a new earth (65:17), a world in which all troubles will be forgotten (65:16). In this new world order, Jerusalem will be a joy, there will be no more weeping and wailing, a hundred-year-old man will be reckoned as one accursed, people will plant vineyards and enjoy the fruit, and they shall be blessed by the LORD (vv. 18-24). And then the final lines: "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox . . . they shall not do evil and they shall not destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD" (18:25). This crucial passage found both in Isa 11 and in Isa 65, speaks volumes. It epitomizes the vegetarian ideal that permeates the spirit of the Bible and the life of ancient Israel.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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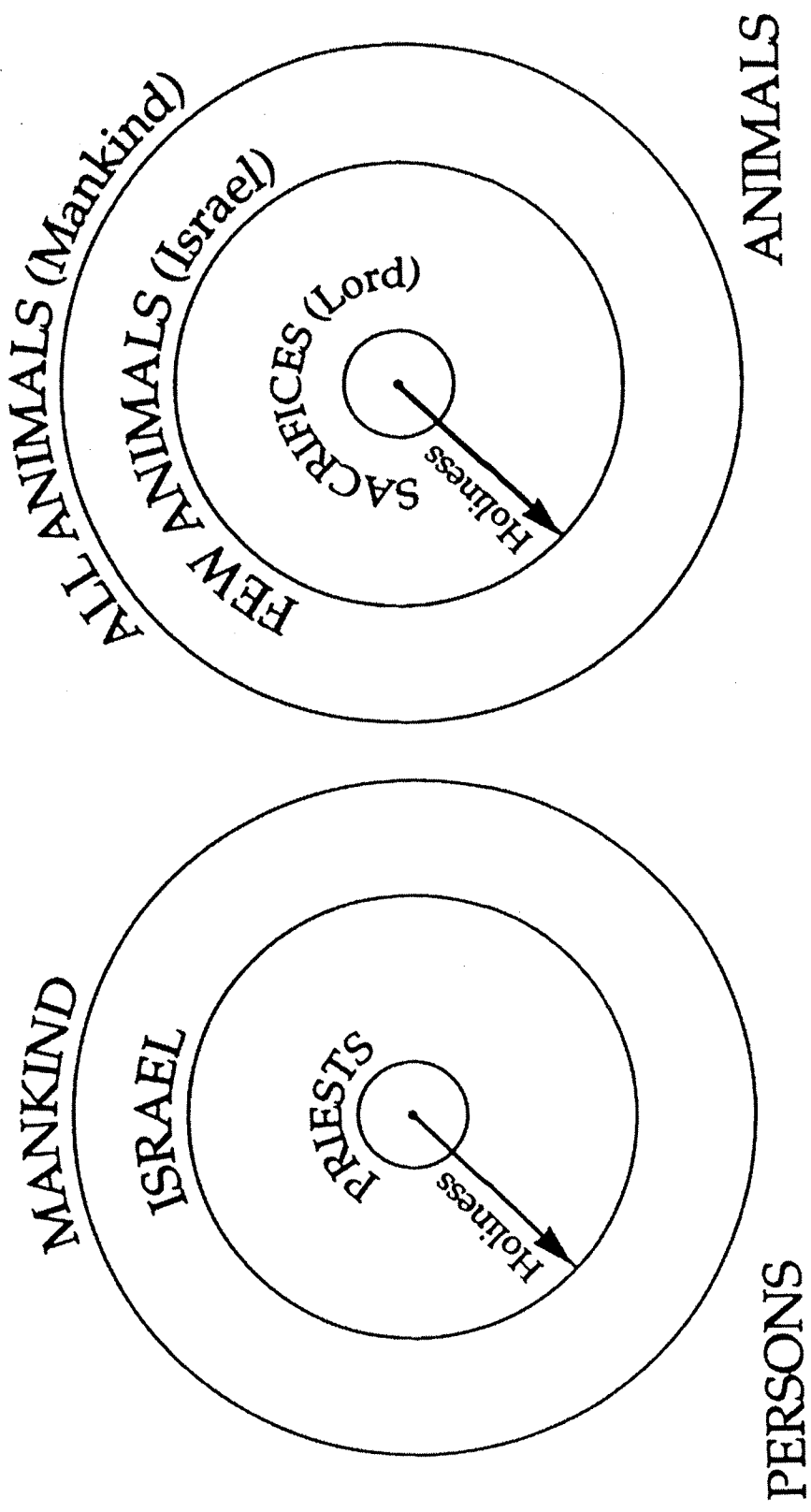


fig. 1: The correspondence between humankind and the animal world. From *Leviticus 1-16* by Jacob Milgrom, copyright © 1991 by Doubleday. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc.

# ISRAEL'S VIEW OF LINEAR HISTORY:

CREATION > HISTORY > ESCHATON



fig. 2: Israel's view of linear history, as reflected in the Bible.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I desist from the JEDP discussion for another reason. I reject the idea that the narratives of the Torah should be divided into smaller parts, much preferring to treat the extended narratives as literary wholes, in line with the work of scholars such as Robert Alter and Meir Sternberg, who have written on the authorial style of the ancient Israelite literati. Naturally, one still must reckon with the many differences between the two creation stories enumerated above, so I do not mean to minimize these differences or to sweep the whole problem under the rug. But simply to ascribe one story to one source and the other story to a second source is a modern evasion, in my view. The community of ancient Israel read these two chapters as one story, and we should, too. See R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981); and M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Other scholars who have noted the different viewpoints in these two stories include Joseph Soloveitchik and Jonathan Sacks, both of whom worked in a Jewish philosophical mode. See J. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition* 7:2 (1965): 5-67 (reprinted as a monograph: *The Lonely Man of Faith* [New York: Doubleday, 1992]), and J. Sacks, "What is Faith?" a public lecture available at <http://www.chief Rabbi.org/faith/faith.html>. I am most grateful to my dear friend Jane Slotin for bringing Rabbi Sacks's important essay to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> P. T. Reis, "Genesis as Rashomon," *Bible Review* 17:3 (June 2001): 26-33, 55.

<sup>4</sup> The vegetarianism inherent in Gen 2-3 is treated in detail by H. J. Lundager Jensen, *Den fortærende Ild: Strukturelle analyser af narrative og rituelle tekster i Det Gamle Testamente* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2000). I am aware of the existence of this volume through the review of Geert Hallbaeck published in *RBL* at [http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/2716\\_1916.pdf](http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/2716_1916.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See the article in this volume, S. Daniel Breslauer, "The Vegetarian Alternative: Biblical Adumbrations, Modern Reverberations," in *Food and Judaism* (Studies in Jewish Civilization 15; ed. L. Greenspoon et al.; Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). The most recent treatment is in Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). It is important to note that there are differences between these two works, and that Douglas's approach has evolved over the course of more than three decades. In the following digest of her scholarship, I sometimes refer to her 1966 stance, while at other times I refer to her 1999 position. I do so, with personal apologies to my esteemed colleague, and with the hope that she will understand that in an essay such as this one, especially given its popular presentation, one cannot enter into in-depth arguments at all times, with a detailed treatment of the differences between the two works. Moreover, and most importantly, there are aspects of both treatments which I find convincing and which serve as support for my own position.

<sup>7</sup> My term, not Douglas's.

<sup>8</sup> The original work is L. Fourie, "Preliminary Notes on Certain Customs of the Heilom Bushmen," *Journal of the Southwest Africa Scientific Society* 1 (1927) (*non vide*). Fourie's work is cited by Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 103. See Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> My thanks to my former colleague Roald Hoffman (Cornell University) for confirming the accuracy of my statement here, especially given my woefully poor knowledge of the physical sciences.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

<sup>11</sup> See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36-37; and a personal example reported by Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 720.

<sup>12</sup> W. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (JSOTSS 140; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 149.

<sup>14</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 722.

<sup>15</sup> B. A. Levine, *Leviticus: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 243-48; and E. L. Greenstein, "Dietary Laws," in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (ed. D. L. Lieber; New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 1460-464, especially 1461-462.

<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 14 has a slightly longer list, with 21 different birds enumerated.

<sup>17</sup> See also the article in this volume, Jonathan D. Brumberg-Kraus, "Does God Care What We Eat?" in *Food and Judaism*.

<sup>18</sup> See the description of Anat drinking blood in *KTU* 1.96:4, from which we may conclude, via the doctrine of *imitatio dei*, that worshippers of Anat, i.e., the Canaanites, consumed blood as well. There is some doubt as to whether Anat is the subject of this difficult text, but regardless of this issue, the drinking of blood is clearly described. For a brief treatment and a translation of this text, see M. S. Smith, "CAT 1.96," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series; ed. S. B. Parker; n.pl.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 224-28.

<sup>19</sup> If one wished to follow this line of thinking a bit further, one might suggest that those animals which may be sacrificed, as indicated by the innermost concentric circle of the diagram (sheep, goats, cattle, and pigeons), are truly vegetarian. Within the middle concentric circle one finds those animals which are primarily vegetarian, but which on occasion also eat other creatures (I refer here to fish, ducks, etc., as per the above). I am not ready to pursue this line of reasoning, but I raise the point should the reader wish to consider it further. The diet of the three ruminants does not require comment, but since the diet of the pigeon is less well-known, I add the following: it consists primarily of seeds and berries; see W. J. Beecher, "Pigeon," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1964), 17.920.

<sup>20</sup> As in other languages of the world, so in Hebrew, there is some crossover between words for "deer" and words for either "sheep" or "goat." Note *'ayyal* [gazelle] and *'ayil* [ram]. The reason for such confusion is clear, since the horns of these animals often are quite similar. More than once I have had a student who has visited Ein Gedi tell me

that he or she thought the ibex easily visible at this location were deer, though in reality the ibex is a wild mountain goat.

<sup>21</sup> Thus Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; less so Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*.

Food and Judaism

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